

2 June 1958

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

SUBJECT: Contact with AECASSOWARY-4, 29 May 1958

Contact with Subject was made in New York in the lobby of the Hotel Astor at 1545 hours on Thursday, 29 May. During the meeting in the Astor cocktail lounge, the following was discussed.

1. Subject was briefed by the undersigned with regard to security aspects concerning the information being requested from him. The undersigned emphasized the importance of Subject's keeping to himself the fact that interest has been shown in the particular group about which they would talk during this meeting.

2. Subject was asked how well he knew Joseph Hirniak and whether or not he thought Hirniak would be knowledgeable of present theater groups in Ukraine. Subject stated that he has frequent contact with Hirniak, that they were well acquainted and that he often chats with him at the Ukrainian Club, down town, east side New York, where Hirniak tends bar. Subject stated that Hirniak was professionally connected with the Ukrainian theater before coming to the West and that he is acquainted with a number of the people presently engaged in the Ukrainian theater in the UkSSR.

In approximately 1924-28, the Ukrainian Communist government had sent Hirniak, along with Iru Patorzhinsky (phonetic) and Iru Vishnya (phonetic) to Berlin to make a study of the theater arts. Later Hirniak was in a concentration camp with Vishnya, they both having been sentenced by the Soviets.

Hirniak was a close colleague of Les Kurbas who was put to death by the Soviets.

It is rumored that Hirniak has in hiding someplace in Ukraine some old photographs of himself with Les Kurbas and some of their theater colleagues. He presently supposedly is receiving these photographs one at a time in letters from an old woman friend of his.

Hirniak's wife also was very well known in the Ukrainian theater and, according to Subject, still does most of the directing for the Ukrainian theater group organized by Hirniak in the United States.

3. The undersigned explained to Subject her interest in Hirniak; i.e., that "we" (usual reference to the Agency in conversations with the

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AECASSOWARIES) have learned that the Kiev Theater, Opera and Ballet has been out to the West. It is of interest to us to have beforehand as much information as possible regarding groups from the USSR traveling in the West. It is felt that because this particular group had been out before, it is possible they will be traveling again. It would be very helpful to us if we could have concerning this particular group advance information such as:

- a. Names of at least some of the members.
- b. Biographical information regarding the individuals, including descriptions of them, and the names of their wives if they are married.
- c. The name of the group director and any information about him as suggested in paragraph b above. It is always of special interest to have information regarding the top man of any group from the USSR coming to the West.
- d. Any information regarding travel of the group; i.e., where they have been or places which they are scheduled to visit in the future.
- e. Any information at all regarding activities of the group in areas outside the iron curtain.

4. Subject stated he felt sure much information regarding this group could be obtained from Hirniak because of his unceasing, avid interest in the Ukrainian theater and his interest in "old buddies" who still are connected with the theater in the UkSSR. Subject also stated that he thinks information regarding the Ukrainian theater could be obtained from other emigres in the United States who had been active in the theater and he promised to supply the name of a former "prima of the Ukrainian Opera" who now resides in the Cleveland or Detroit area. In reply to the undersigned's query regarding whether or not anyone else in the AECASSOWARY group would have easier access or had former connections with Hirniak, Subject stated he did not believe any of their people had former connections with him.

5. The undersigned again emphasized to Subject the importance of the security aspects in connection with the methods he will use in soliciting the information from Hirniak or anyone else and explained to him that this request was being made of him alone, that he will be expected to keep our interest in this regard a closely guarded secret and that he is not to reveal to the other AECASSOWARIES our interest in this group. He promised

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that he would consider this a personal assignment and that he would be careful not to disclose any undue interest on his part. He requested a period of one week to 10 days (maximum) to collect whatever information he could from Hirniak et al because he did not expect to see Hirniak during the holiday weekend.

6. The undersigned told Subject that, although this information was desired as early as possible, he should give first preference to the security aspects when soliciting the information. Subject assured the undersigned he would be very careful, that she should not worry because he often has to collect information desired via "innocent conversations".

7. The meeting was terminated at 1710 hours. Subject will telephone the undersigned as soon as he has the desired information.

[]
SR/3-PP

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 Chief, SR/2
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